

McCollum Urges DoD to Rescind Contract to KBR

Washington, DC – Amid reports that the Department of Defense has recently awarded a multimillion dollar contract to a company under investigation for the electrocution deaths of soldiers, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) today joined Congressional colleagues in sending a letter to Secretary Robert Gates requesting an explanation for the latest award to Kellogg Brown and Root, Inc (KBR), in light of the existing criminal probes against them for the fatality of several U.S. soldiers in Iraq due to faulty electrical work. The 2004 electrocution death of Congresswoman McCollum's constituent, Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class David A. Cedergren, was recently placed under review by military officials, though a direct link to KBR has not yet been determined.

"Secretary Gates should immediately rescind any new awards to KBR. It is irresponsible and negligent for the Department of Defense to grant additional contracts to a company facing such serious allegations. We recently learned, after five years of scrutiny, that a Minnesota sailor was electrocuted to death by faulty wiring. Who can trust KBR's work?" Congresswoman McCollum said.

Last year, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Congresswoman McCollum took part in an in-depth hearing into the problem of electrocutions in U.S. facilities in Iraq. The Committee's findings showed that KBR was alerted to deficiencies in several cases, but failed to take corrective action. In a Pentagon correspondence from last

September, David J. Graff, commander of the Defense Contract Management Agency, wrote, "Many within DOD (Department of Defense) have lost or are losing all remaining confidence in KBR's ability to successfully and repeatedly perform the required electrical support services mission in Iraq."

"We have a moral responsibility to ensure the safety for our troops at home and abroad - not pad the pocket of a negligent military contractor," Congresswoman McCollum added.

Since the beginning of the Iraq war, KBR has received over \$28 billion in contracts from the US Military, while facing numerous investigations into the dangers of their faulty electrical work since the first award in 2003. The Department of Defense Inspector General is currently looking into the deaths of 16 soldiers and 2 American contractors in KBR-maintained facilities. The ongoing criminal probes involve deaths caused by hazardous power lines and poorly installed electrical devices. Officer Cedergren, who was found dead in an outdoor shower stall in Iraq, is the focus of the latest case being linked to negligent electrical maintenance.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.

###